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## **Communications and Expressive Arts**

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*Minnesota*

### **Youth Against Prejudice**

**Situation:**

The Minnesota 4-H Communication Arts program offers opportunities to enhance communications skills, while fostering positive action and understanding of young people in all racial, religious, and ethnic groups that make up our society. Contestants address issues relating to the overall theme of “Youth Against Prejudice” in four categories: public speaking, creative writing, interpretive reading, and photojournalism. Participants spend the weekend prior to the state contest with Jewish host families in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. They participate in a weekend of Jewish and multi-cultural programming, including a Jewish Sabbath meal with host families, synagogue services, Yiddish storytelling, and Israeli dancing. Senior level winners receive all-expense paid trips to Israel. In 2001, winners were awarded trips to the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Through participation, young people learn a process that enables them to combine their beliefs and attitudes with information to publicly interact with others. They experience the opportunity to inform, persuade, or state their values about matters that are important to them, especially with regard to diversity and pluralism in a democratic society. They understand their strengths and weaknesses while improving their communication skills.

**Program Description:**

The Communication Arts program occurs all over the state, including both urban and rural audiences. Fourteen multi-county events were held, with participants from first grade through high school. Additionally, county events are held promoting the improvement of speaking and writing skills. Youth do not need to be 4-H club members to participate in the program.

*Topics for 2001 were:*

1. What has been your experience of living with prejudice (or that of someone you have interviewed/researched)? How did you deal with the feelings created by this experience? What did you do or not do to change your own or other people’s perspective or thinking?
2. How can a lack of understanding by individuals, communities, or nations lead to prejudices and/or a violation of rights? How can today’s youth influence a movement in society toward the acceptance of diversity to reduce/overcome fear and violence? (Theme from National 4-H Conference, 2000)
3. How does a lack of understanding and an abundance of prejudice among Palestinians and Israelis impact the Middle East peace process? What can be learned from this example? As the

world moves to a more global perspective (economically and in other ways) and our communities become more diverse, how can we welcome and encourage this diversity in our own communities? Cite some positive examples of how this is happening in your own community. What have you done in school, and with family, friends, neighbors, etc.?

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

With events at the local, county, multi-county, and state level, more than 1,000 youth participate in the Communication Arts program. Eighty-one youth participated in the state level event in 2001. This is the 18th year of the program, held in cooperation with the Jewish Community Relations Council and including trips to Israel or Europe for state winners.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

With programs that started at the county level, nearly 1,000 youth learned about issues of bigotry, racism, and discrimination. They gained new friends in the process of learning about overcoming ignorance and achieving tolerance. The program also helps to shatter the image some might hold that 4-H is about cooking, cows, and country kids. Prejudice is prevalent everywhere and cuts across rural and urban boundaries.

**Quotes:**

*Jewish rabbi* – “They (the teens) were incredible. We talked about everything from Jewish history and the Torah to the kosher laws. I was very impressed by their interest and questions.”

*JCRC representative* – “These are kids who stepped beyond themselves to learn about other communities and about understanding tolerance and what happens when there is prejudice or intolerance.”

*State winner* – “I’ve learned a lot and my views have changed a lot. There is still a lot of discrimination and prejudice out there.”

*State winner* – “It is a really great experience to learn about different people, faiths, and traditions.”

*State winner* (regarding trip to Israel) – “How did this trip affect me? ...it changed my life. ...New situations serve to widen the mind, providing a larger base on which an individual can build the infrastructure of his or her life. That’s change for the better.”

**Resource Commitment:**

External funds contributed for this project were obtained by the Jewish Community Relations Council. Two endowments have been established to support the cost of six all-expense paid trips to Israel, and this year to Europe. The trip is valued at \$2,500-\$3,000 per person. In previous years, financial support was also obtained from Subway Restaurants and media support from WFTC-TV FOX 29. Extension supports the state coordinator’s part-time position and the efforts of the county Extension Educators around the state.

**Collaborators:**

This event is co-sponsored by the Center for 4-H Youth Development, University of Minnesota Extension Service, and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas.

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*South Dakota*

## **4-H Performing Arts**

**Program Description:**

The South Dakota 4-H Performing Arts Troupe program is one of excellence for youth. Not many programs like this exist in the nation. The program was developed 18 years ago and continues with the leadership of a state youth development/4-H specialist.

The South Dakota 4-H Performing Arts Troupe program is open to all South Dakota youth, rural and urban, ages 13 to 19 years old. Through the program, youth develop skills in communication, expression, interaction, decision-making, planning and organization, and problem solving. They understand themselves better and experience diversity.

The South Dakota 4-H Performing Arts program involves the experiential learning model:

1. Experience learning the activity from professionals, rehearse, and perform.
2. Share the results with their peers, parents, and community.
3. Process the information by reflecting on the life skills they have learned and gained.
4. Connect the experiences to real-world examples.
5. Apply what was learned to similar or different situations and practice the skills.

Learning to feel comfortable on stage with others encourages youth to develop self-confidence for public speaking presentations, along with giving them communication skills in a variety of different situations. The South Dakota 4-H Performing Arts program prepares youth for the “real-world.” By seeing, doing, reflecting, and applying, youth get the most out of the learning experiences to benefit them for life.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

The South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service invests approximately 10% FTE for this program, with the additional professional staff being salaried by two funding sources. The youth in this program are allowed to gain opportunities that they may not otherwise experience. The variety of experiences found in the South Dakota 4-H Performing Arts program focus on differences, cultural awareness, and specialization and give youth a valuable learning experience.

**Accomplishments and Impacts:**

The pre-registered youth gather in June for a week-long in-depth camp. The professional directors, gleaned from the local schools and from the state universities, and parent volunteers write the script, design the stage set, sew costumes and gather props, and cast each year's production. Each entity comes together to make "the show go on." Professionals who like to work with youth, parent volunteers who have a vested interest in their own youth, and funding from two groups who want to provide a positive learning experience for the youth — all experience the opportunity to showcase youth, their talents, and development of life skills.

Quotes from the youth, a parent, and a director:

- "You gain stage presence, learning how to get up in front of people and act natural." Katie Walker, age 16, from Roslyn.
- "I can't go many other places and sing and dance on stage. You get a chance to use your talents. It's a really great experience." Pei Yen, age 15, from Brookings.
- "It seems like school music programs are receiving budget cuts every year. It's just so much fun. We work a lot, but it's all worth it in the end." Kristina Hohm, age 15, from Mitchell.
- "I couldn't wait until I turned 13 so I could do this. We do lots of singing and dancing. I was a little nervous, but I just took control of myself and did it." Sarah Jerke, age 13, from Aberdeen.
- "I think it's a great opportunity for kids to get up and show their talents. It takes a certain amount of something to get up and sing and dance in front of their peers, their parents, and their community. It is a great confidence-builder for teens." Nancy Klungseth – mother of Holly Klungseth, age 13, from Aberdeen.
- "This program brings understanding, admiration, and confidence to the youth who participate," stated Roger McCafferty from Aberdeen, one of the directors. "This truly is making the youth better able to cope with stress and making decisions, better able to feel good about themselves and others, better able to work with each other and adults, and better able to give voluntarily understanding and appreciating their community."

**Resource Commitment:**

First, the resource commitment is possible because of the youth and their families wanting to be involved in the educational program and willing to pay a \$150 registration fee for a 7-day camp to learn and perform the show for the South Dakota State Fair audiences.

Second, the program receives about \$15,000 from the South Dakota State Fair Commission to

help with the expenses of the professional staff, salaries, stage, set construction and transportation, sound and lights, music, costumes, props, and makeup, and printing of the programs.

Third, the South Dakota 4-H Foundation provides the dollars generated through the youths' registration fees and designated donors or about \$20,000 each year, depending on the number of youth involved in the program. The Foundation's funding provides for the camp expenses such as professional salaries, lodging and food, rental of the facilities on a state university campus, the performance T-shirts and caps designed with the program logo, and additional state fair expenses such as photographs.

**Collaborators:**

The youth and their families, county Extension educators, South Dakota 4-H Foundation designated donors, and South Dakota State Fair Commission and their management.

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*Massachusetts*

## **4-H Visual Presentation Program**

**Situation:**

Public speaking is perceived as very stressful to many people. Teaching children how to review a topic and then, present the information in a very logical, creative and confident manner is one of the most valuable life skills a person can learn. Our statewide 4-H Visual Presentation Program has been extremely successful in helping children achieve this life-long skill. An extensive evaluation of this program has shown that children have increased their confidence, comfort and ability in public speaking.

**Program Description:**

The goal of this program is to encourage youth to develop communication skills and promote confidence in public speaking. The program is conducted in every county with regional trainings for youth, adult volunteers, and teen & adult volunteer judges held throughout the winter months. Competitive events at the club, local, and county level are scheduled by mid-March of each year. Successful participants are then invited to a statewide event in April.

**Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

The FTE commitment to this project is minimal. A total of 7 professional staff and two volunteers work together on a state committee to organize and conduct the state event. The team meets about five times a year and combined with other staff involvement at county & regional trainings and programs, we would estimate the FTE commitment to be .4.

Participant and stakeholder satisfaction is high with the state program attracting between 260 to 300 participants each year. Approximately 50 % of these individuals are repeat participants.

### **Accomplishments and Impacts:**

In 1999, an extensive evaluation of the 4-H Visual Presentation Program was conducted with data collected from two distinct sources: first time program participants between the ages of 9 to 13 and parents of youth who participated in the Visual Presentation Program at the state level.

60 first time youth participants were presented with a questionnaire related to statements about public speaking, social skills and communication skills. Several months later, after they had completed their first visual presentation, these youth were mailed a second questionnaire with identical statements. 28 of the youth (41%) responded to the second questionnaire. Responses by these youth demonstrated several measurable effects which included:

- \*\* A modest increase (from 77% to 80%) was reported in the degree to which youth felt confident in their public speaking ability.
- \*\* A more substantial increase (from 80% to 87%) was reported in how comfortable the youth would feel in making an oral presentation at school.
- \*\* The youth also reported a substantial increase (from 73% to 79%) in their general level of organization when it comes to school work.

52 parents of youth attending the state visual presentation program responded to the survey that focused on how participation in this program impacted their children. Data provided by these parents reflect an overwhelmingly positive appraisal of the effects upon their children of participating in this program.

Data results showed that:

- \*\* 98% of the parents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that as a result of the program, their child was a more confident public speaker.
- \*\* 91% of the parents believed their children were more confident in general.
- \*\* 76% thought the program would help their child succeed in college.
- \*\* 93% believed that their child’s participation in this program would help their child throughout his/her career.

**Resource Commitment:**

When the State Visual Presentation program originated in 1972, funding came through program-based funding. Today the event is almost entirely supported through ear-marked funds from a donor to the Massachusetts 4-H Foundation whose children had very positive experiences participating in this program!

**Collaborators:**

Contributors to this program include: the Massachusetts 4-H Foundation (program funding & marketing), the Massachusetts 4-H All Stars (who serve as hosts/hostesses at the state event) and the Nashoba Regional High School and Bedford Middle School (host sites for the state program).

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**Other base program areas this program applies to:**

Leadership and Volunteer Development